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## BRIEF MENTION

*The Social Criticism of Literature*, by Gertrude Buck (Yale University Press, 1916). This is a booklet of only sixty pages, but it contains matter enough to inform the average reader of much that pertains to the theories and principles of literary criticism and the function of the critic. The treatise may, conceivably, be widely welcomed, for a large class of readers is usually ready to be captivated by the promise of a very brief exposition of a profoundly important subject. This preference for little books on large subjects is, for obvious reasons, not to be regretted,—publishers of the shilling-series value it in their own way,—but it is also to be guarded against, in so far as it may be symptomatic of superficiality, of a disposition to evade assiduous effort. Writers of elementary text-books are peculiarly exposed to the temptation—too often not resisted—to save the pupil's effort by excessive brevity, simplification, and dilution at the cost of impairing the wholeness and lowering the dignity of the subject handled.

By distinguishing the plastic arts as the arts of space and rest from the rhythmic arts as the arts of time and movement, one directs special attention (leaving aside the art of music) to the office of the reader, not only of poetry but of all forms of writing. The act of reading is to be considered as the process by which a composition in any department of the art of writing is made complete and effective. This coöperation of author and reader should be well taught in the schools, and it should be kept in mind steadfastly by the general reader so that his reading may be profitable in a worthy sense, and that he may be less prone to stand in indiscriminate awe of the reputed 'well-read' man,—a designation that is not forthrightly interchangeable with 'well-informed' or 'well-poised.' To teach reading should mean to teach a sympathetic approximation to the act of creating the composition; and the reader of whatever class of writings should thruout life grow in this power of sympathetic and unbiassed approximation. The application of this indicated test to large classes of readers would undeniably reveal a discouraging prevalence of feeble and uncertain notions of what constitutes right reading, and one may reasonably suspect that this result is in some measure due to an excess of codified professionalism in the methods of teaching literature in the schools and colleges. More right reading, aiming at personal appreciation and the completion of the author's creative act would enable the teacher to obviate much idle questioning of the value of the study of literature, and furnish occasion for pertinent instruction in how to think and how to exercise the imagination constructively. In the average mind the words culture and æsthetic appreciation would thus inevitably take on more of the

deep meaning of what is essential to well-ordered habits of the mind. No doctrine is more in need of inculcation than that of the practical value of a sure and refined sense of intellectual and social proprieties, which is not the fastidiousness of a Bembo, but the good taste that betokens the enlightened mind.

It is not digressing from the specific subject of the book in hand to offer reflections on the true meaning of reading, for Miss Buck interprets right reading as the gate-way to right criticism. The suspected digression may now be justified by direct citation: "The essential character of reading, whether elementary or advanced in its type, is found in no mere perfunctory turning of leaves, but in active participation, however limited it may be, in the experience which the writer would communicate. One reads, in any real sense of the word, only in so far as he thinks the writer's thoughts after him under the stimulus of his words, sees what the writer saw, feels what the writer felt" (p. 20). "In some sense one must, as Ruskin says, in order to read at all, ascend to the writer's level. . . . One must approximate the writer's position in order even to begin to read him. . . . The active minded reader finds that, in order to think the writer's thought after him, he must, for a time in very truth, be the writer. He must reconstruct the writer's *milieu*, social, industrial, political, and the writer's individual life as thus determined, or fail fully to apprehend the thought which grew out of and was modified by this particular set of conditions. And he must furthermore know the writer's tools, the form with which he worked, its limitations and possibilities" (p. 21 f.). As to the interrelation of reading and criticism, in the same context: "Reading begins the process of criticism at the impressionistic stage. . . . It is true that only in the degree of his training and sensitiveness has the reader's reaction value for anyone else. But this training and sensitiveness are by no means fixed quantities. They develop in and through the very act of reading." . . . "the simple, unanalytic process of reading [may] pass by imperceptible degrees into the furthest reaches of that extremely complex activity called criticism."

Hitherto, is the assumption, the theories of criticism have been at variance with each other, rending a seamless robe into shreds (p. 31); "but a new commandment has been given by social criticism, namely, that the critic, having reached [by good reading] conclusions for himself, shall then hold them as essentially tentative and personal, not only refusing steadfastly to impose them upon other readers, but giving no sanction to their use by any reader as a substitute for his own critical activity. This is indeed a hard saying, for the critic as well as for the reader; and it can be fulfilled by the critic only as he definitely acknowledges his primary obligation to help, not hinder, the reading of others" (p. 51). Taken together, the passages cited must give a clear notion of the particular point of this treatise. A precise definition of social

criticism does not seem to be possible because of its complex implications. This complexity is due to the admission of the contributory value of all preceding theories and methods of critical study and evaluation, which are here reviewed with comment, which is, however, at places marred by a touch of rather inappropriate sprightliness, betokening lurking prejudice against some methods of study, and a too sparing recognition of the principle of division of labor adopted by scholars to secure the valid whole. But if Miss Buck's pages be subjected, as they should be, to "genuine reading," the act on which she places so strong an emphasis, all will willingly be allowed to pass for the sake of submission to an enthusiastic discussion of the relation of reader to critic and of critic to reader.

Logically "social criticism" is not to be placed in the category of methods described as deductive, inductive, æsthetic, etc.; it merely concerns the motive that should impel the critic. A new stress is thus put on the old truth that a composition attains its varying degrees of finality in the effect produced on the reader, the completest reading producing the completest effect; and the timeliness of the lessons to be drawn from this discussion may be supposed to be undeniable. Surely many a reader and many a teacher of literature might, by this little book, be induced to put a higher value on the act and discipline of reading, and it should just as surely help the professional critic to execute with greater zeal the social function of mediating between author and reader.

J. W. B.

*James Macpherson's Fragments of Ancient Poetry (1760).* In diplomatischem Neudruck, mit den Lesarten der Umarbeitungen. Hrsg. von Otto L. Jiriczek (Anglistische Forschungen, Heft 47; Heidelberg, Carl Winter, 1915). Excepting an extremely rare and rather inadequate publication of the Aungervyle Society (Edinburgh, 1881, privately printed, only 150 copies), this first specimen of Ossianic poetry has not hitherto been accessible to scholars. The original sixteen fragments are now offered in a strictly diplomatic reprint, with a short introduction and a complete list of the variant readings of the early editions, particularly of the three issues of 1760, *Fingal* (1762), and of the *Poems of Ossian* (1773). Some of the variants are noteworthy for showing Macpherson's growing tendency to impair by over-refinement the primitive soberness of the fragments.

W. F.

*Parts of the Body in Older Germanic and Scandinavian.* By Torild A. Arnoldson (Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1915. xii + 217 pp. Linguistic Studies in Germanic, Edited by Francis A. Wood, No. II). This book presents to us an imposing collection of semantic synonyms. The purpose is not to furnish an

etymological dictionary of words denoting parts of the body, nor the semasiologic development of such words in the usual sense of the term, but rather to trace the rise of the varied ideas expressive of the human body, in Gothic, Old and Modern Norse, and in the older West Germanic dialects. The process, in fact, is "different." Instead of a search for root-relationships, as Old Norse *hofuð*, Old English *hafud*-, Sanskrit *kapālam*, Latin *caput*, Lithuanian *kāpas*, etc., or following up the varied fortunes of such words as OE. *cēace*, 'cheek,' originally 'swelling,' but to-day 'impudence, front, brass'; OE. *heorte*, 'heart,' become thru international loan-translation 'courage, resolution,'—the lexical aspects of the parts of the body are scrutinized with respect to their primary significations. Granted the 'head.' The question is, what original meanings, thru later restriction or extension, developed the ultimate idea corresponding to 'head'? We learn that the concept of 'head' in the Germanic languages grew out of such disjointed notions as 'top, summit,' 'edge, projection,' 'dot, point,' 'round object: ball, bowl, pot, mound, nut,' 'brain-bowl, brain-place,' 'lump,' 'shell,' 'bare spot,' 'something ruffled, tousled,' 'scurf' and 'covering'; and on the basis of MHG. *gebel* 'head,' *schedel* 'skull,' *houbet* 'head' we can collect such a varied crew of semantically cognate words as OE. *gafol* 'fork,' *scēap* 'sheath,' OBret. *scōit* 'shield,' OPers. *kaufa* 'mountain.'

Separate chapters are assigned to the Head, Limbs, Trunk, Organs and such miscellaneous parts as 'nerve,' 'marrow,' etc. The words are arranged according to the respective parts of the body, and under each part the groups of meanings, in etymological units, so that a sample entry appears as follows: (Limbs: Toe:)" Point, Digit: ON. *tá*, Sw. *tå*, Dan. *taa*, OE. *tā*, *tāhe*, MLG. *tē*, OFris. *tāne*, OHG. *zēha*, MHG. *zēhe* toe: ON. *tjá* zeigen, mitteilen, Goth. *-teihan*, Gr. *δείκνυμι* zeige, Lat. *dico* sage, *digitus*, etc. Cf. Walde<sup>2</sup> 233 with references." And since the book is full of such entries and consists of nothing but such entries, it is barren in appearance. Albeit interesting in spots, it does not make interesting reading, any more than a dictionary would. One is convinced that it possesses more than the modicum of usefulness ordinarily inherent in such semantic studies; but, without formulation of laws or the drawing of conclusions, it seems to have voluntarily surrendered a good part of its right to existence. Might not the author have succumbed to the temptation of appending at least a brief summary of inferences? How and why the primary concepts evolve into the later functions; suitable citations for the more striking cases as e. g. 'mass, heap' > 'mouth'; 'sight, look' > 'cheek'; 'tube, pipe' > 'arm'; 'bread-hand' > 'left hand'; 'healing-finger, name-finger, nameless finger, gold-finger, poor-finger' > 'ring-finger,' etc.; classifications of how the same concept, such as 'top, summit' becomes 'head,' 'brain,' 'neck'; 'mass' becomes used for 'shoulder,' 'brain,' 'mouth,' 'kidney,'

etc? In the absence of such deductions, the work, tho of decided merit, seems to be a mere compilation from the various dictionaries listed in the bibliography, in which the author's own part is not sufficiently emphasized.

A. G.

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Dr. Carl A. Krause's *Direct Method in Modern Languages*, Contributions to Methods and Didactics in Modern Languages (Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1916), is not only a highly valuable "theoretical" contribution to Modern Language Methodology, but it is a real help to those teachers who seek practical advice and guidance. The Direct Method has made rapid progress in the last few years, the need of reform being felt everywhere. As a result, theoretical and also stimulating discussions have been going on for some time, but comparatively little has been done by the older and more experienced modern language teachers in giving help and useful advice to the younger generation of their colleagues. The Universities, with a few exceptions, do not train the prospective language teacher in any practical and pedagogical way, at least not in special methodology, so that very frequently the young and inexperienced teacher must find his way alone and struggle along as best he can.

Dr. Krause, for many years a leader in the reform movement, has fully appreciated this need, and has come to the assistance of those desiring practical advice based upon *experience* and *real conditions*, as much as the printed word will permit. His book gives all the information that a modern language teacher is anxious to obtain, and reveals on almost every page the practical school-man, whose advice may be followed safely. We see that the author is intimately acquainted with the real needs of our schools, with the actual conditions of the classroom, and that he is therefore in a position to do much more than to discuss merely *in theory* the important issues and aims.

His critical remarks are sound and to the point. "The trouble," he says, "with many of our school grammars is that they carry too much dead wood which may be of interest and value to the specialist, but not to schoolboys and schoolgirls, who are in no position to assimilate doctoral dissertations" (page 60). Or: "The too hasty striving after the classics is an abomination. If we want to behold a solid, beautiful superstructure, we must have a stable basis. Travelling at railroad speed through the fields of language prevents our going botanizing" (page 61).

Dr. Krause's sound defense of the reform should appeal to every "real, live teacher." Speaking of the Direct Method, he says: "It teaches the language, and not merely about the language, as is done by the indirect procedure." May this excellent book come into the hands of every language teacher!

A. K.